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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 001181

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SUBJECT: AUDIENCES FORAINES PROCEEDING CLUMSILY, BUT
WITHOUT VIOLENCE

REF: A. ABIDJAN 1158

[1](#)B. USDAO ABIDJAN 261703Z
[1](#)C. ABIDJAN 909

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Silvia Eiriz for
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The audiences foraines process is proceeding clumsily but without violence. Less than a quarter of the planned tribunals have been deployed since the process was launched on September 25 and public awareness remains low. Political parties are closely monitoring the proceedings and there have been few reports of intimidation. As of mid November, 36,851 cases had been adjudicated. End Summary.

Process Clumsy But Without Violence

[1](#)2. (SBU) The audiences foraines (public tribunals issuing birth certificates to persons over 13 whose births were never registered) are proceeding clumsily since their September 25 launch. However, unlike in 2006, there have been no reports of large scale violence or intimidation of participants. To date, only 25 of 111 planned tribunals are operating. United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) officials told the diplomatic community in late October that public awareness about the process remains limited and that the 25 tribunals currently operating only cover 90 of the country's 727 communes. Disagreement exists about the number of persons who must have recourse to the audiences foraines to obtain birth documentation; estimates range between 300,000 and 3 million. Political parties have deployed representatives to observe the audiences foraines. The Prime Minister's office told Emboffs that, as of November 10, nearly 36,851 applications had been adjudicated and only 6 percent had been denied. Most rejections occurred because applicants did not apply in the jurisdiction in which they were born. A program to issue identity documents to all Ivorians, which was supposed to begin a month after the launch of the audiences foraines, has not yet begun.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA) provides that the audiences foraines will last for three months. Paul Koffi Koffi, Deputy Director of the Prime Minister's Cabinet confirmed October 25 that, while each audience foraine will last only three months, the opening date of each individual audience foraine will start the three month clock. It is therefore quite possible that audiences foraines in some parts of Cote d'Ivoire could continue well into 2008.

Link To Elections

¶4. (SBU) The OPA states that the supplementary certificates issued by the audiences foraines will be the only documents accepted for voter registration if an individual is not on the 2000 electoral list and does not possess a birth certificate. During the OPA negotiations, the New Forces sought to have the nationality of the applicant included on the certificates issued by the audiences foraines, but the Gbagbo camp refused. The OPA provides that the certificates will note the nationality of both parents, thereby facilitating subsequent establishment of nationality. Judges are noting in many of their decisions that parents' nationality is "said to be Ivorian" since the judges do not have time to conduct investigations. Whether these certificates will be sufficient proof to allow the holder to register to vote remains unclear.

Moving Ahead

¶5. (SBU) The Prime Minister's office (PMO) told Emboffs November 20 that by the end of November, 30 new tribunals will be deployed; by mid-December an additional 30 teams will be deployed; and at the end of December, the final 25 teams will be deployed. Officials in the Prime Minister's office blame the slow deployment of tribunals on lack of funding and administrative support (reftel A).

¶6. (C) Comment: Prime Minister Soro took a risk by pushing for the launch of the audiences foraines in late September before the civil administration and the tribunals were ready. It was most likely a move calculated to mollify his constituency, which includes many of those without documents. Moreover, since the OPA gives primary responsibility for

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carrying out the "sortie de crise" program, which includes the audiences foraines, President Gbagbo appears to have effectively shifted responsibility for this process -- and the blame for anything that goes wrong -- to the Prime Minister. While the lack of violence is encouraging, the apparent inability of mid-level Ivorian diplomats to organize the audiences foraines in a timely and efficient manner raises questions once again about how strong a political will there is to resolve the underlying causes of the conflict. End Comment.
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